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THE PLANNING COMMISSIONS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES  
OF LOCAL SOVIETS IN THE USSR

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The national economic plan determines and directs the economic life of the USSR. In a socialist state the plan is the law for the development of the national economy. In addition to the over-all state economic plan, plans are also formulated on a regional basis and for separate branches of the national economy.

Among the organs of state power which deal in economic planning are the local soviets of workers' deputies and their executive committees and divisions. The plans for economic and cultural construction made by the local soviets are an organic part of the over-all state economic plan. The fundamental political and economic tasks set by the party and the Soviet government for the planning period determine the development of the national economy of the USSR as a whole and of its separate krais, oblasts, okrugs, and rayons. The organs which carry out specific and general planning along the lines of the Gosplan are the planning commissions in the kray, oblast, rayon, and city soviets of workers' deputies and in their executive committees. The planning commissions are in charge of general supervision of quarterly, yearly, and long-range plans prepared by divisions of the executive committee and by enterprises and establishments under the jurisdiction of the rayon or oblast. These commissions differ from the divisions and administrations of the executive committees in that they function on the principles of "collegiality" (kollegial'-nost').

The work of the planning commissions of executive committees of local soviets gets little publicity in the press. Occasional newspaper articles tell chiefly of the deficiencies noted in the work of these commissions with the aim of correcting them. However, the legal status of the planning commission has not been sufficiently explained to the public. The Gospolitizdat (State Publishing House of Political Literature) recently published a book by

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P. I. Pitayevskiy on the planning of the economy of an administrative rayon. This book, however, does not show the organizational role of the executive committee of the rayon soviet, or of the planning commissions, in economic planning. Also omitted in this book is the role of planning commissions of executive committees of city and oblast soviets of workers' deputies. Meanwhile, the present role of planning commissions of executive committees of local soviets is especially important, considering the great construction projects now in progress. Such subjects as construction in cities and consolidated kolkhozes, the uncovering of local supplementary reserves, etc., should be seriously considered by the planning commissions.

The present article deals with certain questions concerning the work organization of planning commissions of executive committees of oblast, rayon, and city soviets.

The planning commission of an executive committee is a permanent commission of the committee. The planning commissions of executive committees of rayon and city soviets, as well as the planning commissions of oblast soviets, function on equal terms with divisions of executive committees. Usually, whenever the executive committee gives serious attention to the planning commission, the latter performs an important role in raising the level of work of the entire rayon or city. In close cooperation with the commission is an aktiv of specialists, which helps the executive committee to improve the utilization of the natural resources of the entire rayon or city, to control the fulfillment of plans by enterprises, and to correct mistakes and compensate for shortages.

The chairman of the commission must be approved by the soviet of workers' deputies, while the members of the commission, drawn from the ranks of scientists, specialists, etc., must be approved by the executive committee. The staff of the commission is small, especially in executive committees of rayon soviets. The planning commission should not assume a departmental character, and for this reason its personnel should not be drawn merely from representatives of the administrations and divisions of the executive committee. According to stature, the commission must include a council, which, with the approval of the executive committee, should recruit the services of specialists of various branches of the national economy, scientific workers, persons active in public education, and others. These people should undertake a study of the productive forces of the oblast, city, or rayon. With their help, the planning commission can work out the planning of serious economic problems.

Drafts of decisions of the planning commission must be discussed at a meeting of the commission. However, the chairman has the right to make decisions on his own responsibility and to carry them out immediately.

The planning commission prepares drafts of plans for the economic and cultural construction of the kray, oblast, rayon, or city. These drafts must be approved by the executive committee and then presented to the corresponding soviets of workers' deputies for approval. The work of a planning commission, directed by the executive committee of the soviet, serves as an example of planning for other organizations. The planning commissions control the fulfillment of the national economic plan and other state plans by the organizations, institutions, and enterprises under the jurisdiction of the executive committee. The commissions submit proposals for ensuring the fulfillment of approved plans to the executive committee for its consideration. The responsibilities of a planning commission include a study of the economy of the kray, oblast, rayon, or city, the setting up of economic indexes, and the uncovering of supplementary resources to be used in furthering economic and cultural development. The planning commissions provide for the proper distribution of industrial, trading, and other enterprises and institutions of public health, public education, and culture.

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These general rules apply to all planning commissions of local soviets. The main differences between various planning commissions lie in the volume of work and competence of the given executive committee.

The oblast planning commission should set an example for the planning commissions of executive committees of rayon soviets and city soviets (of cities subordinate to the oblast), which, if properly supervised, are important supports of the oblast planning commission.

The main task of the planning commissions includes the complete utilization of the natural resources in an oblast, city, or rayon, the disclosure of internal reserves for the fulfillment and overfulfillment of national economic plans, the steady increase of production, and the general improvement of living conditions.

From what has been said, it follows that the oblast, city, and rayon planning commissions have an important role. These leading planning organs of the executive committees are called upon to ensure, in planning, a strict observance of both government and local economic interests, since these interests are not contradictory in the USSR.

The USSR has an inexhaustible supply of natural resources. In the years of Soviet rule, it has acquired a highly developed industry and an extensive, mechanized kolkhoz and sovkhoz agricultural system. Under such conditions, an unlimited field of activity is open to the planning commissions. Planning provides for a complete utilization of mineral resources, raw materials, and waste products received from enterprises under all-union and republic subordination (for the improvement of work of local and cooperative industry), and the introduction of more profitable branches of agriculture, such as truck farming, horticulture, and apiculture.

The workers of the planning commission should have a thorough knowledge of the natural resources and the economic capabilities of the city or rayon and should actively support their utilization.

The chief task of planning commissions in the field of agriculture is to strive for an increase in the yield of all crops and an increase in the number and productivity of livestock. Correct planning of economic development is the most important condition for the further growth and strengthening of kolkhozes. The local soviets and agricultural and planning organs must offer kolkhozes the necessary help in this important matter.

Long-range plans for an extensive development of the economy and culture of kolkhozes help the leaders of the soviets, MTS, and kolkhozes to a better understanding of economic problems. The planning commissions give long-range directives for all branches of work of the executive committee, with the active participation of all supervisory personnel. Those planning commissions of executive committees which attempt to leave all the specialized planning to the corresponding administrations or divisions are acting incorrectly.

The planning commissions must show initiative in the creation of raw material bases for industrial enterprises, in the mechanization of production processes, and in the organization of new types of production. If local or cooperative industry falls behind, a portion of the blame must fall on the local planning commissions. The planning commission unites the initiative of all the administrations and divisions and points out to them the means of overcoming difficulties confronting them. The leadership influence of the planning commissions must also be evident in problems pertaining to culture, public health, trade, local and cooperative industry, etc. Problems of

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economic and cultural construction are included in the draft of a single plan for the rayon or oblast; the planning commission later checks on the fulfillment of the plan.

The planning commission is interested in enterprises of all-union and republic subordination. From these, the planning commission can obtain valuable practical information on the utilization of equipment, the increase of labor productivity, and the lowering of costs. There are instances when the local industry of a given rayon or oblast cannot fulfill its plan because of a shortage of lumber or metals in that particular region. At the same time, enterprises under all-union or republic subordination located in the territory of the rayon or oblast have sufficient supplies of good-quality waste lumber to supply the needs of local industry, if only the planning commissions of the rayon or oblast would take an interest in this problem and show the necessary initiative.

In some oblasts, kolkhozes are frequently in great need of certain items such as bags, rope, iron pitchforks, etc. Although it is possible to make these articles from local raw materials, nevertheless they are transported from far-off places. The initiative to rectify such a situation must come from the local planning commission.

The executive committees of local soviets are obligated to make regular reports on the work of their planning commissions.

Every month and quarter, the planning commission prepares a statistical summary of the results of the activity of production systems and of individual enterprises. This summary is usually presented to the executive committee of the local soviet for its consideration. The summary contains figures received from the divisions of the executive committee and other departmental organizations. In addition to this important data, the planning commission should also have information on the qualitative work indexes, on the increase of labor productivity, and on the decrease of costs and improvement of quality of products. The commission should also present information on plan fulfillment, together with suggestions for improving the work of lagging branches of the economy. All of this must be systematically checked and analyzed. For this purpose, economists and other specialists working in the planning commission cannot limit themselves to written reports only, but must acquaint themselves with the production process at the place of work and the course of plan fulfillment.

The planning commissions of the executive committees of rayon soviets decide important problems. They plan their work on the basis of local living conditions and provide the initiative in resolving the most important issues in the development of the economy.

The planning commissions have to prepare timely, all-inclusive plans for the development of all branches of local economy, including plans for kolkhoz production, rayon and cooperative industry, trade, and social-cultural construction, and they exercise a systematic control over the fulfillment of these plans. They must undertake a thorough study of economy in the rayon to uncover and utilize supplementary resources and reserves and to provide measures for improving the work of lagging sectors. The planning commission must also work out a long-range plan for the development of agriculture, not only for the rayon as a whole, but also for each individual kolkhoz. The tasks of planning commissions have grown considerably in connection with the consolidation of kolkhozes. The planning commission makes plans for extensive construction projects in the kolkhozes.

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One of the conditions for improving the material welfare of workers is the development of local industry and industrial cooperatives. Enterprises of local and cooperative industry are able to make a better study of consumers' demands and of the economic requirements in a rayon and to utilize more fully the local resources for satisfying these demands and requirements.

The following is an example of the good results achieved through the proper operation of a rayon planning commission. In Korsunskiy Rayon of Ulyanovskaya Oblast, there are 13 enterprises of local and cooperative industry. All of them use both local raw materials and waste products of state industry. Due to the proper functioning of the planning commission of the Korsunskiy Rayon Soviet, the local industrial enterprises have established a proper relationship with state enterprises in the rayon and oblast, whereby waste products of state industry were made available to the local and cooperative industry. As a result, the 1951 gross-production plan was fulfilled 101.8 percent and the output of various goods increased by more than one million rubles over 1950.

The influence of the planning commission was apparent in cases where enterprises found to be lagging at the beginning of the year had a record of more than 100 percent plan fulfillment by the end of the year. For instance, the Korsunskiy Rayon Industrial Combine showed only 70 percent fulfillment of the plan for the first quarter 1951 and 78 percent fulfillment for the second quarter. There was cause for alarm concerning the fulfillment of the year plan under such conditions. Necessary measures were taken by the planning commission through soviet and party organs. Representatives of the planning commission visited the enterprises and uncovered the causes for nonfulfillment of the plan. The commission analyzed these causes and made suggestions for improving the technological process and the organization of work at the enterprises.

The conclusions and suggestions of the commission were examined by the soviet and party organs of the rayon, which then undertook concrete measures on all the issues involved. The planning commission saw to it that these measures were carried out. The management and all the workers of the enterprises were also interested in improving the work of their enterprises. As a result, in the third quarter the plan was fulfilled 117 percent and in the fourth quarter, 140 percent. This uneven fulfillment of the plan displays a lack of planning and control at the beginning of the year. However, the fact that the planning commission of the executive committee of the rayon soviet uncovered these deficiencies and undertook measures to eliminate them proves that the planning commission understood its tasks and contributed considerably to the plan fulfillment.

This fact led the planning commission to draw some necessary conclusions for the future. In 1952, this commission planned for a significant increase in the output of furniture, household wares, etc., made from local construction materials. In doing this, the planning commission outlined advance measures for controlling plan fulfillment.

The planning commissions should employ the best available planning experts with considerable practical experience.

The planning commission of the executive committee of a local soviet, like other divisions of the executive committee, has a dual subordination. This means, for example, that the rayon planning commission should be administered not only by the executive committee of the rayon soviet, but also by the corresponding oblast planning commission. The oblast commission is obligated to advise and instruct the rayon planning commissions in regard to work methods, and to check their work and their reports.

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To strengthen the oblast planning commission's control over the rayon and city commissions, it has been proposed by local workers that a special sector of rayon planning be created in the oblast commission. In turn, the oblast planning commissions should receive the proper directives from the Gosplan of the union republic.

There are certain peculiarities in the work of planning commissions of executive committees of city soviets under oblast jurisdiction, which have city rayon subdivisions. In such a city the following committees operate: the executive committee of the oblast soviet and its planning commission, the executive committee of the city soviet and its planning commission, and the executive committees of the city rayon soviets with their planning commissions. As a concrete example, let us take the planning commission of the Kalinin City Soviet.

Since there are no statutes on the work of planning commissions of executive committees of city soviets, they are directed by the statutes of rayon planning commissions, approved by the All-Union Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars RSFSR on 10 November 1937. The fundamental issues concerning activities of the commissions are: (1) the preparation of a uniform city plan for economic and cultural construction (long-range, yearly, and quarterly); (2) the control and observation of the course of fulfillment of the approved plans and the development of practical measures to ensure their fulfillment; (3) the coordination of separate economic measures, worked out by city organizations and presented for approval to the executive committee of the city soviet or some higher organ; and (4) the study of productive forces and the uncovering of supplementary resources and reserves of the city for the purpose of utilizing them to the fullest extent.

The organization of the tasks to be fulfilled by the planning commission of the executive committee of the Kalinin City Soviet is done in the following manner. In forming a uniform plan for the city, the commission requests corresponding plans from the divisions of the executive committee, while its own staff works out the basic indexes of the plan. After receipt of the plans from the divisions, these plans are compared with the drafts of the commission, which checks the correctness of plan indexes and makes the necessary corrections. The plan is then discussed at a meeting of the planning commission, after which it is presented for consideration to the executive committee of the city soviet.

Fulfillment of the approved plan is supervised by means of periodic on-the-spot checks of various branches of the economy, using a specified list of questions and work indexes. The services of members of the commission, its staff employees, and the soviet aktiv, composed of specialists and members of other permanent commissions of the city soviet, are used during this check. Data presented by the divisions and enterprises, at the request of the city planning commission, are also used for supervising plan fulfillment.

From data produced by the check, the planning commission prepares reports and surveys with suggestions, which it presents to the oblast planning commission and to the executive committee of the city soviet.

All the work is done by the staff of the city planning commission, which consists of three permanent workers, the chairman of the commission and two economists.

The planning commission of the executive committee of the Kalinin City Soviet consists of nine persons, in addition to the chairman. The commission performs an important service in coordinating the work of the divisions and enterprises of the city soviet. However, there remain certain deficiencies in

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the work of the commission. Most obvious is the departmental character of the personnel of the commission. Scientific experts and specialists, which the city of Kalinin has in sufficient quantity, are not brought into the work of the commission to the extent that they should be. Also, the executive committee of the city soviet does not sufficiently utilize the knowledge and experience of scientific workers.

It is necessary for a planning commission to participate in all aspects of the formation of a plan. It must not limit itself to the sanctioning of a plan prepared by its staff as a matter of office routine. Long-range planning for the entire economy should not be limited to a mechanical combination of drafts of plans presented by the divisions of the executive committee. The members of the planning commission must show an interest in and provide the initiative for the formation of these plans. This will increase the responsibility of the planning commission, as well as raise its authority.

This is the way in which the planning commission of the Gorodetskiy Rayon Soviet, Gor'kovskaya Oblast, performs its work. This commission is made up of experienced people who show initiative and efficiency. All members of the commission participate actively in deciding problems concerning the development of local economy. An aktiv of specialists is formed to assist the commission. The members of the commission and its aktivists [active collaborators] lend practical assistance to the kolkhozes, enterprises, and other organizations in improving their plans. The commission directs the agricultural experts on its staff to the kolkhozes, where they assist the kolkhoz management in forming production plans and estimates of income and expenditures and work out measures for improving the organization of labor and raising the productivity of live-stock raising. The planning commission of the executive committee of the Gorodetskiy Rayon Soviet not only prepares plans, but also supervises and organizes the fulfillment of these plans. Many planning commissions of executive committees of local soviets operate in the same manner. However, the work of some planning commissions needs improvement.

Some planning commissions, especially the city commissions, need more definite instructions from the Gosplan of the republic, particularly in regard to the training and distribution of personnel.

In Kalininskaya Oblast, the oblast planning commission often performs the work which should be done by the city planning commission. The preparation of a draft of the national economic plan for Kalininskaya Oblast and the presentation of the draft to Gosplan RSFSR were formerly handled by the oblast planning commission, without taking into account the drafts of plans of the rayons and city. In fact, the oblast planning commission had already submitted its draft to the Gosplan RSFSR when it received the drafts of plans from the rayons and cities. This was an incorrect procedure. For some reason, the inspectorate of the Central Statistics Administration in the city of Kalinin is not coordinated with the planning commission of the city soviet. The commission receives from the inspectorate none of the report data necessary for the preparation of plans and for checking the fulfillment of plans within the approved limits.

The planning commissions of executive committees of city soviets are greatly in need of a publication of statutes concerning the work of city planning commissions and of more definite instructions from higher levels. The executive committee of the Moscow City Soviet of Workers' Deputies, for instance, has adopted such a statute. The personnel of the city planning commission of the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet consists of a chairman, a deputy chairman, and members, specifically designated by the executive committee.

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The planning commission prepares drafts of long-range and yearly plans, with quarterly breakdowns, for the development of the Moscow city economy, and presents these to the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet and Gosplan RSFSR for their consideration and approval. It also submits to the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet resolutions on long-range, yearly, and quarterly plans presented by the administrations and divisions of the executive committees of the Moscow Soviet and the rayon soviets of the city, as well as resolutions on plans of enterprises and organizations whose work is connected with the city economy. The Moscow Soviet planning commission also prepares resolutions concerning the city budget and the cash plans of the city finance administration, the Moscow Office of the Gorbank (City Bank), and the Mosgorbank (Moscow City Bank). On the basis of plan checks, the commission submits proposals to the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet for the purpose of preventing interruptions in the fulfillment of state plans.

The planning commission of the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet, acting on its own initiative as well as under directives of the executive committee, works out problems concerning the reconstruction of the city and the coordination of activities in individual branches of the city economy, and it prepares resolutions in matters of city planning and in matters related to all new capital construction in the city regardless of departmental subordination.

The planning commission determines methods, in compliance with directives of Gosplan USSR and Gosplan RSFSR, to be used in planning the city economy. Together with the organs of the city statistics administration, the commission works out the economic indexes for the development of the Moscow city economy.

The administrations and divisions of the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet and the planning commissions of executive committees of city rayon soviets in Moscow are governed by directives of the city planning commission on issues involving methods of planning and control of plan fulfillment.

The most important problems of the commission are: the preparation of a long-range plan for development of the city economy of Moscow, the consideration of complex problems and the examination of balance sheets of the various branches of city economy, together with the submission of proposals to the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet, for the purpose of ensuring the speedy fulfillment of plans involving the city economy. Other important tasks of the commission are to uncover internal reserves of the city economy, and to ensure the most economical procedures in the fulfillment of plans and a steady improvement of the living standard of the city population. The commission also guarantees, in the plan for development of the city economy, a proper correlation between various branches of the economy, and provides measures necessary to prevent any disproportion. Other tasks of the city planning commission include over-all planning and coordination of the plan for capital construction, the plan for production, the plan for labor and personnel, the plan for operation of city enterprises, the technical and financial plan, the city budget plan, and the plan for obtaining materials and equipment. The planning commission of the Moscow Soviet has handled these tasks in a satisfactory manner; however, the commissions in certain other cities need a clearer definition of their functions. An essential part of the work of the commission is the control over the fulfillment of the plan for scientific research and plans for technical measures to ensure fulfillment of national economic plans involving the city economy, by economic organizations of the Moscow Soviet and the executive committees of the city rayon soviets.

The authority of the planning commission extends to the formation of a plan broken down by city rayons, to ensure proper distribution among the rayons of various branches of the economy, especially construction of new housing and municipal buildings, as well as cultural and public services construction.



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The planning commission of the Moscow Soviet has the right to demand all the necessary materials concerning plans and their fulfillment from the administrations and divisions of the executive committee and from trusts, enterprises, and organizations under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Soviet and the rayon soviets. The commission may also communicate directly with organizations connected with the city economy of Moscow, although they may not be subordinate to the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet, on matters concerning the formation and fulfillment of plans. In accordance with directives of Gosplan USSR and Gosplan RSFSR, the planning commission of the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet issues instructions to organizations of the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet and to the executive committees of the rayon soviets on all matters of organization and methods of work planning. In matters concerning the development of the Moscow city economy, the commission has the right to designate special commissions of experts to carry on investigations for detailed studies of various issues, and to enlist scientific specialists and other experts for consultation. It is directly stated in the statute on the planning commission of the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet that the commission has the right to receive from the city statistics administration reports and statistical material necessary for the preparation of plans concerning the development of the Moscow city economy and for the supervision of the fulfillment of these plans.

Whenever necessary, the city planning commission can call interdepartmental conferences for discussing the more important issues on reconstruction of the city economy, in connection with the formation of long-range, yearly, and quarterly plans.

The city planning commission of the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet directs the work of the planning commissions of the executive committees of rayon soviets, controls the organization and maintenance of their work, and gives instructions and aid in the organization of planning and in checking the fulfillment of national economic plans. Thus, the relationship between the all-city planning commission and the rayon planning commissions in Moscow is on an entirely different basis from the relationship existing in Kalinin.

The planning commission of the executive committee of the Moscow Soviet has 16 sectors dealing with various branches of the city economy, i.e., coordinative planning, rayon economy, housing construction, municipal services, planning of project-making organizations, railroad and water transport, industry, fuel and power engineering, culture and health, material resources, trade and public eating, transport and communications, labor and personnel, agriculture, and equipment. Each sector is in charge of the entire cycle of planning for the corresponding branch of the Moscow economy and controls the fulfillment of the plan in this branch, both in regard to qualitative and quantitative indexes.

It is important that the party, soviet, and trade union organs pay more attention to the organizational structure of the planning commissions, ensuring the proper functioning of the commissions according to the directives issued at the 18th Party Congress which state that "...the central task of the reorganization of planning is the organization of a control of plan fulfillment, for the purpose of preventing any disproportions in the economy, uncovering new reserves for the fulfillment of plans, and, in accordance with the actual results of plan fulfillment, making adjustments in the various economic branches and regions."

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